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China and Opium

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## NOTES AND REVIEWS

### CHINA AND OPIUM

That China is determined to stamp out the curse that has meant poverty and degradation to her people since foreigners first began the forcible importation of the drug is again evidenced by the announcement in Chinese papers recently to hand that the Shanghai Opium Combine will be granted no extension of time to dispose of their stock. On March 31 of next year their traffic must stop; and when the year ends, the contract made with England some ten years ago will also expire. China will be practically opium free.

Much has been accomplished during the past ten years by organized effort in weaning the people away from the drug. Propaganda and preaching, huge bonfires with fitting ceremonies, local restriction have all done their part in weakening the hold of the habit on the people. Five years ago, as Governor of Hupeh, Li Yuan-hung, now president of China, was active in the destruction of all opium in that province; and the opium fighters are now finding him ready to coöperate with them in seeing the work through.

Anticipating the end of the opium connection with Great Britain next winter, the Chinese government recently communicated with the British minister at Peking requesting that a British envoy be deputed to China to head an investigation into the work and results of the opium suppression campaign in China. At the same time, circulars were sent to all the provinces preparing them for the impending complete extirpation of the opium traffic as follows: (1) All the opium plantations in the land shall be wiped out during a period of three months, from September to November of this year; (2) the trade in opium shall be entirely stopped in a period of four months, from December of this year to March of the next year; and (3) the smoking of opium shall be entirely done away with in a period of three months, from March to June of next year. Bonfires have been frequent since these orders went into effect, the Chihli Opium Prohibition Bureau at Kalgan making perhaps one of the most spectacular affairs. A large quantity of opium was gathered,

together with all the opium-smoking instruments the officials could lay their hands on, invitations were issued, and a delegate from the National Opium Prohibition Union was requested to come as a witness. The acting president, Mr. An Ming, responded, and the ceremony proceeded in due and thorough order, lasting from eight in the morning to one in the afternoon, with the civil governor of Chihli, the military governor of Kalgan, the police authorities, and citizens from all neighboring sections an enthusiastic audience. This is typical of scenes being enacted in many parts of China.

The Shanghai Opium Combine is the only legal surviving distributor of opium, having secured a license to carry on their traffic until March 31, 1917, in the provinces of Kwangtung, Kiangsu and Kiangsi. To their bribe of \$16,000,000 for the privilege of an extension, to their threat of withholding their extra duty of \$1750 per case, the Chinese government has lent a deaf ear. The opium traffic must go, and as quickly as possible. The threat of the Combine to stop the payment of the additional duty, even if it is carried out—which is unlikely—would only mean a loss to the government of something like \$5,000,000. According to trustworthy information, the Combine can sell between now and the 31st of March, 1917, three thousand cases at a valuation of \$5,000 per case, which would give the government a revenue of \$5,000,000 a small sacrifice where the physical and moral welfare of the country are at stake. And President Li and his cabinet have lost no time in declaring that there shall be no compromise.